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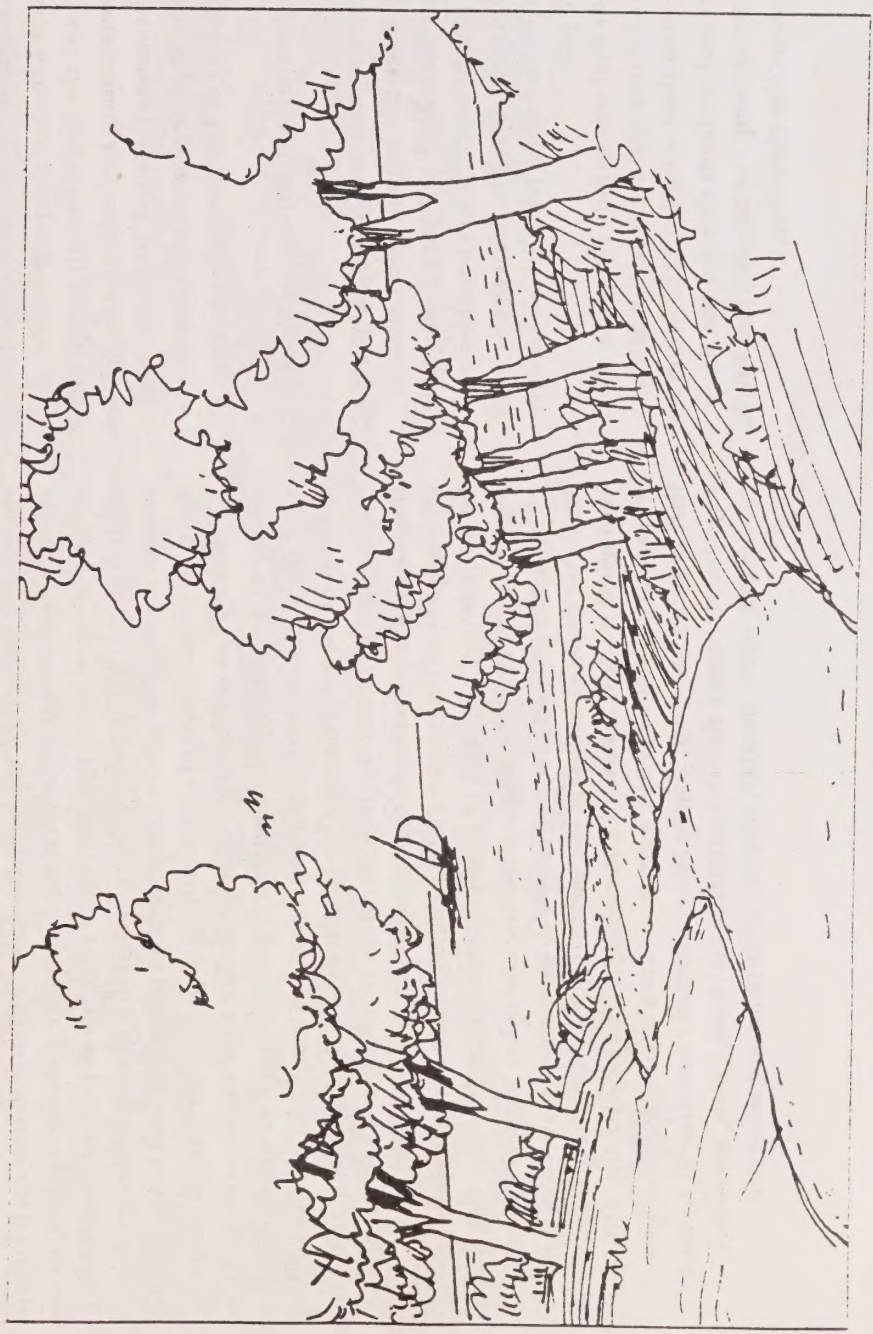
Lake Ontario Greenway
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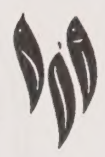
Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy

SUMMARY



WATERFRONT
REGENERATION
TRUST

MAY 1995



"Protecting and restoring ecological health, a sense of community, and economic vitality"

A VISION FOR THE LAKE ONTARIO GREENWAY

Fifty years ago, the north shore of Lake Ontario was a string of communities, large and small, separated by farmland and forest, joined by two-lane roads, railways and lake shipping routes.

Today, that same waterfront has become the largest urban conglomerate in the country, with the distinctions among its communities masked by subdivisions and superhighways, its waters polluted, its forests and wetlands reduced to remnants. Despite that degradation, many places on the waterfront provide a special quality of life for residents, and recreation and beauty for visitors.

Fifty years from now, what kind of waterfront will our children and other forms of life share?

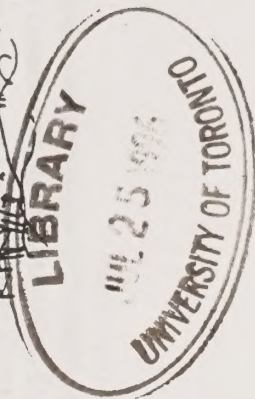
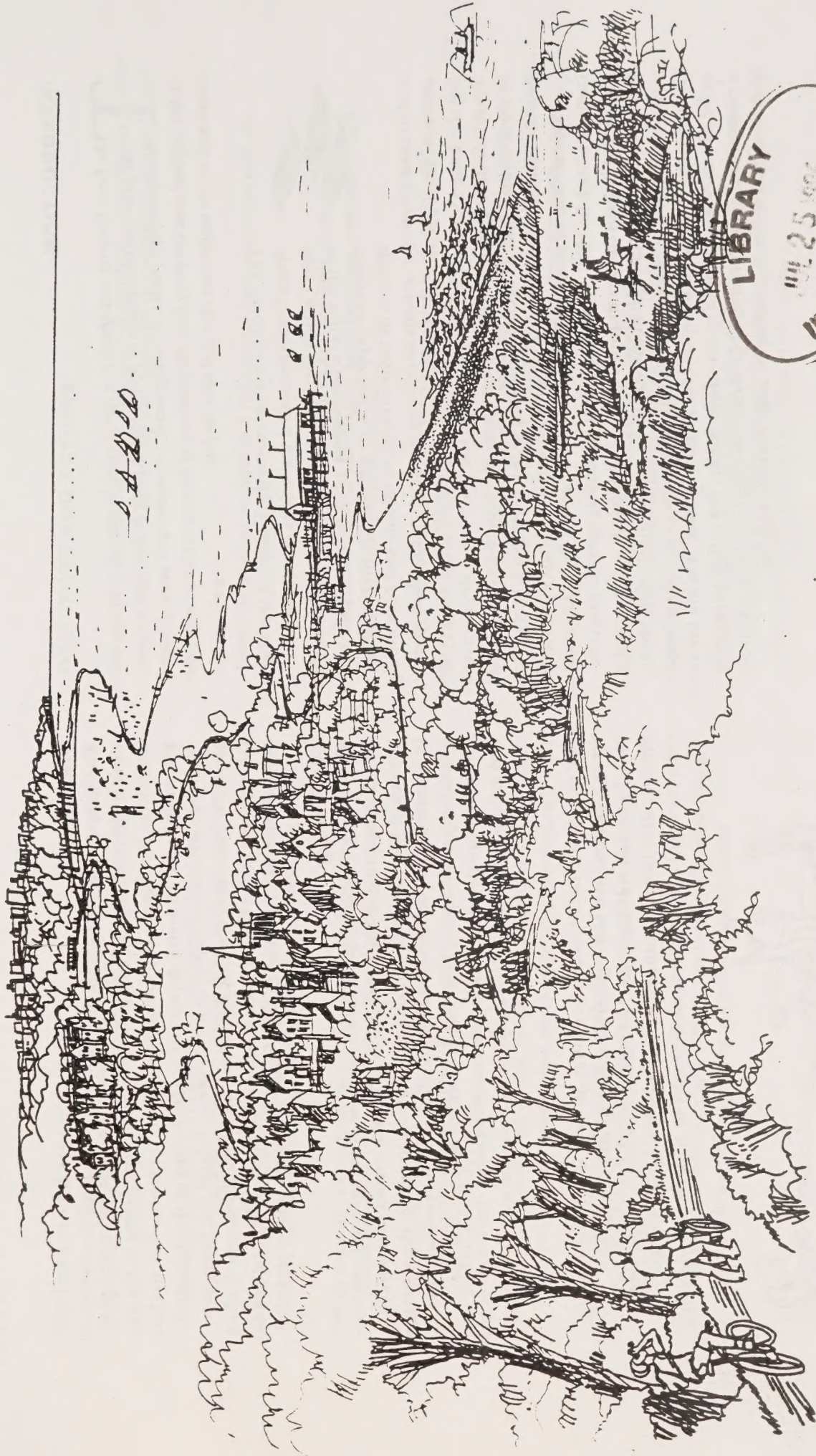
Waterfront communities will be larger, that is certain, and more crowded and more diverse, with over twice the human population in the surrounding region. But the waterfront itself will have emerged as a vital focus for those communities, a special place to be cherished and visited often by local residents and tourists alike. The Waterfront Trail will be a vital link between communities, bringing people into contact with the water's edge throughout the year.

Some of us may go to the shore to find tranquility alongside the water – water clean enough that our children can swim or fish safely. Or we might go to catch sight of the abundant wildlife in the protected natural areas and regenerated forests and wetlands that dot the shore in blocks large and small. We might stroll along the beaches and bluffs, watching the waves that continually shape the shoreline.

Most of us will visit the waterfront to play – to boat or picnic or watch birds, or to walk or cycle along paths that loop and interconnect along the entire length of the shore. We might also come to shop or dine or visit festivals in the vibrant "people places" that cluster along the water's edge. And when we come, we will notice how each community has used its waterfront heritage to create a distinctive feel, its own unique sense of place that proclaims pride in its past and confidence in its future. That pride will be reflected in a quality of design that creates memorable places and special experiences, and in the involvement of a wide range of community groups in waterfront activities.

Some of us will be lucky enough to live near the waterfront, in a variety of housing types and styles. A good many of us will find work near the water, in businesses and industries that share a sense of stewardship of the environment, or in offices in our homes. For an increasing number of urban dwellers, the daily drive to work will change, thanks to new automobile technologies, improved transit and expanded networks of commuter cycling routes. Some of those routes will be set in broad corridors of green up the river valleys that link the waterfront to the Oak Ridges Moraine and other natural habitats.

The Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy is about protecting and restoring those elements of the waterfront that we jointly value – ecological health, a sense of community, economic vitality. Fifty years from now, we will value the waterfront even more than now, and that sense of value will give us the continued commitment to work together to ensure that the waterfront is clean, green, accessible, connected, open, useable, diverse, affordable and attractive.



INTRODUCTION

The Lake Ontario waterfront is a significant provincial resource, which has provided generations of people with a place to live, food sources, transportation routes, drinking water, recreation and more. However, it has suffered over the years from the pressures of human activities along the shore and in the watersheds that feed into the lake.



The Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront developed the values and principles upon which the Strategy is based. The basic thrusts of the Royal Commission – the need to apply an ecosystem approach, to address the overlapping spheres of environment, economy and community, and to coordinate the actions of existing agencies rather than impose solutions from above – are incorporated into the Strategy. In coordinating the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust is fulfilling its mandate to coordinate the programs and policies of the Province and its agencies relating to the waterfront, and to facilitate the establishment of a waterfront trail and associated open spaces.

A great deal of progress has been made since the Royal Commission began its work in 1988 – progress in implementing specific projects; significant improvements in provincial and municipal policies; and, not least, a striking change in the way many communities view their waterfront. The Greenway Strategy reports on this progress and establishes a consensus-based blueprint for further actions. It is not intended to be a formal statement of government policy, but rather to provide a context for setting priorities, guidance on ways to achieve a shared vision, and an information base to assist decision-making.

The Greenway

The Lake Ontario Greenway encompasses the lands and waters that show a direct ecological, cultural or economic connection to the waterfront from Burlington Bay to the Trent River. It extends into the lake, generally to the 10 metre depth within which most of the nearshore coastal processes and fishery activities occur. Inland, the Greenway generally extends to the first significant rise in elevation, which often corresponds to the former Lake Iroquois shoreline. Where significant natural areas extend up major river valleys, they are usually included.

The Strategy

The Greenway Strategy provides an overview of background and context, a description of the key features of the waterfront of today, an analysis of the objectives and actions necessary to realize the waterfront of tomorrow, and an overview of implementation mechanisms and roles. A separate report, *Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy: Next Steps*, provides more detailed mapping and recommended regeneration goals and actions for each of 14 landscape units along the waterfront.

The Goal

The goal of the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy is to foster commitment to actions that will regenerate a healthy and sustainable waterfront that is clean, green, accessible, connected, open, useable, diverse, affordable and attractive. This goal is supported by five objectives, and a series of actions necessary to achieve each objective.



Challenges and Opportunities

A number of issues recur frequently in all sections of the waterfront. They provide the central set of challenges and opportunities which this Strategy addresses:

- Access to the shore, including access to walk, boat, swim or fish; visual access; and access for people of all ages and abilities.
- Reversing environmental degradation, to restore past damage to water quality, soils and groundwater, and natural habitats.
- Economic renewal, using a revitalized waterfront as a lever to renew downtown cores and areas abandoned by industry.
- Guiding development, so that new developments contribute to regeneration and address local environmental, economic and community needs.
- Maintaining cultural values, by avoiding further loss of heritage structures, scenic landscapes, and community identity.
- Improving decision-making, both through the municipal planning system and the regulatory approvals for changes along the water's edge.
- Balancing competing objectives, by reinforcing diversity along the waterfront and respecting other community needs.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

To achieve the waterfront of the future described in the Vision, a wide range of actions is underway and planned to contribute to five broad objectives:

Objective 1

Protect the physical, natural and cultural attributes associated with the Lake Ontario Greenway

Protect significant coastal features and habitats, such as coastal processes that maintain bluffs and sand beaches, and open coast aquatic habitats for coldwater fish.

Protect waterfront natural core areas, which include 90 of the most important natural habitats within the Greenway.

Protect bioregional habitat corridors and connections, including 35 valleys connecting to the Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges Moraine, and Lake Iroquois shoreline, and forest/wetland corridors near the waterfront.

Protect water quality from further deterioration, particularly by preventing release of persistent toxic substances and by protecting tributary waters.

Protect places of archaeological, historic and cultural significance, including known and potential archaeological sites, historic buildings or structures, and cultural heritage landscapes.

Objective 2

Identify restoration needs and methods and encourage landowners, communities and agencies to undertake regeneration activities

Restore the supply of natural habitats that sustain biodiversity, with targets to re-establish coastal wetlands and native forest.

Target restoration programs to priority habitat types, especially to large blocks of natural habitat, valley corridors near the lake, and specialized shoreline habitats such as dunes.

Restore natural shoreline structure and processes, using an ecosystem approach to shoreline treatment.

Restore balance to Canada Goose populations, to reduce conflicts with recreational uses.

Restore degraded waters and sediments, both at a lakewide level and through special efforts such as the Remedial Action Plan programs.

Restore sites with contaminated soils or groundwater, including former industrial, landfill and lakelake sites.

Strengthen community identity and landscape character by protecting views and vistas, developing design guidelines, and planting trees.

Objective 3

Promote greater awareness, understanding and recreational use of the waterfront and encourage community pride and participation in its regeneration

Encourage appropriate access to and use of the waterfront, making sure that sensitive habitats and neighbourhoods are protected.

Complete and upgrade the Waterfront Trail, to add to the 87% now complete, to enhance user experiences, and to provide services where needed.

Develop public understanding of waterfront processes and values, through a broad range of interpretive initiatives.

Develop community participation by involving service clubs, local industries, interest groups and the public in education, access and restoration projects.

Strengthen traditional waterfront festivals and celebrations in Greenway communities, and explore the potential for a coordinated waterfront-wide festival.

Recognize changing populations in planning waterfront recreation, to serve an aging and diverse population.

Link recreational resources with health promotion, using waterfront areas to contribute to active living programs.

Increase accessibility to all members of the community, by increasing facilities for those with disabilities and improving personal safety for all users.

Objective 4

Promote economic activities and employment on the waterfront that are compatible with other Greenway objectives

Enhance the role of existing and new economic activities, recognizing the rapidly changing nature of business and industry along the waterfront.

Ensure appropriate location and design of new development, particularly through the re-development of urban core areas with a compact form, a mix of land uses, and built form that is sensitive to its waterfront location.

Monitor and respond to changing patterns of harbour use, through a review of industrial and recreational harbour needs.

Identify and develop tourism/recreation destination areas, including 11 primary destinations with the ability to attract and serve large numbers of visitors, and 13 secondary destinations with more limited facilities.

Develop new waterfront attractions, especially within selected destination areas.

Develop joint packaging and marketing of themed waterfront experiences, to create a critical mass of tourism facilities and services.

Reduce conflicts between transportation corridors, waterfront access and sense of place, especially in the central Toronto waterfront area.

Objective 5

Foster cooperation in cost-effective public and private initiatives by reducing jurisdictional gridlock, sharing resources, and coordinating waterfront activities

Integrate the application of provincial policies, regulations, and processes, especially by coordinating approval requirements for shoreline projects.

Coordinate the allocation and timing of funding to waterfront projects, including Waterfront Trail, restoration, interpretation and recreation projects.

Assist in resolving jurisdictional or policy conflicts through round-table approaches, partnerships, and mediation.

Standardize and link research and information networks, to support future management and monitoring of progress.

Evaluate the cumulative effects of waterfront changes and assess progress through regular Greenway Report Cards.



IMPLEMENTATION

Most of the mechanisms necessary to implement the Greenway Strategy are already available, and can be described in three categories.

A. Planning/Regulatory

- Municipal planning and environmental assessment
- Legislation affecting use of water's edge and offshore
- Other regulatory instruments
- Watershed strategies and subwatershed plans
- Remedial Action Plans
- Integrated Shoreline Management Plans

B. Stewardship

- Management of public lands
- Land acquisition by public agencies
- Landowner contact

C. Funding and Incentives

- Coordinating plans and projects with funding opportunities
- Directing economic incentives
- Attracting private funds to waterfront projects



Defining Roles for Waterfront Regeneration

Responsibility for implementing the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy cannot rest with any single agency. Rather, each of the agencies, municipalities, and groups with an interest in the waterfront needs to review its own area of responsibility and actions, to ensure that it is contributing in a positive way to achieving the vision and objectives of the Strategy.

The Waterfront Regeneration Trust will continue its leadership role in bringing agencies and municipalities together to address issues, coordinating funding proposals, reporting on progress and challenges, and promoting appropriate conservation and use of the waterfront.

Federal and provincial agencies, conservation authorities and municipalities will be encouraged to incorporate the Greenway Strategy into their planning, regulatory, and other activities. The academic community will be asked to assist in research and monitoring. First Nations peoples will be encouraged to help raise public awareness about the importance of the waterfront in native history and spirituality. Businesses, industries, community groups and individuals along the Greenway will also continue to have many opportunities for involvement in regeneration activities.

The Lake Ontario Greenway Steering Committee, which represents the range of agencies and groups involved in the Greenway, will continue to meet regularly to exchange information and experiences, discuss priorities, monitor progress, address common issues, and continue the momentum towards waterfront regeneration. Where needed, workshops and special workgroups will be used to address technical issues and to undertake projects.

The challenges of the Lake Ontario Greenway are great, often beyond the ability of any one individual, group or agency. But by working together with a shared vision, there is no doubt that the progress already made to regenerate the waterfront will be sustained and multiplied in the future.



WATERFRONT PRINCIPLES



CLEAN: all activities and future development should work with natural processes to contribute to environmental health; air, land, sediments and water should be free of contaminants that impair beneficial uses by all living beings.



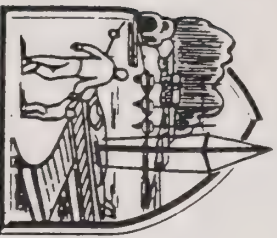
CONNECTED: connections throughout the bioregion with the region's natural and cultural heritage (wildlife habitats, city and countryside, social communities, past and present, people and nature) should be restored and maintained. Greenways should connect and incorporate existing public open spaces to form a "linked-nodal" pattern.



GREEN: natural features and topography should form a "green infrastructure" for the bioregion including natural habitats, land-forms, aquifer recharge areas and other open spaces.

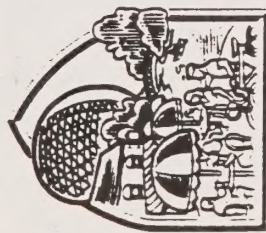


OPEN: existing views of Lake Ontario and its bays, bluffs, peninsulas, and islands should be maintained. Views created by the open expanses of water should be treated as important values. Density and design of waterfront structures should not create a visual barrier to the lake.



ACCESSIBLE: waterfront communities should be serviced by roads and public transit. Improvements to access should be made for people to enjoy the waterfront on foot or by bike. The waterfront should be accessible to everyone including the disabled, children, and older adults.

WATERFRONT PRINCIPLES



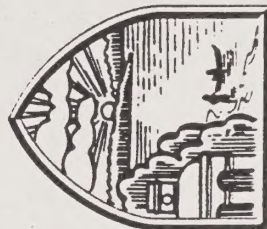
USEABLE: the waterfront should support a mix of public and private uses. Uses should be primarily water-related; permit public access and use; provide a balance of ecological, recreational, employment and residential opportunities; be environmentally friendly; and promote year-round use.



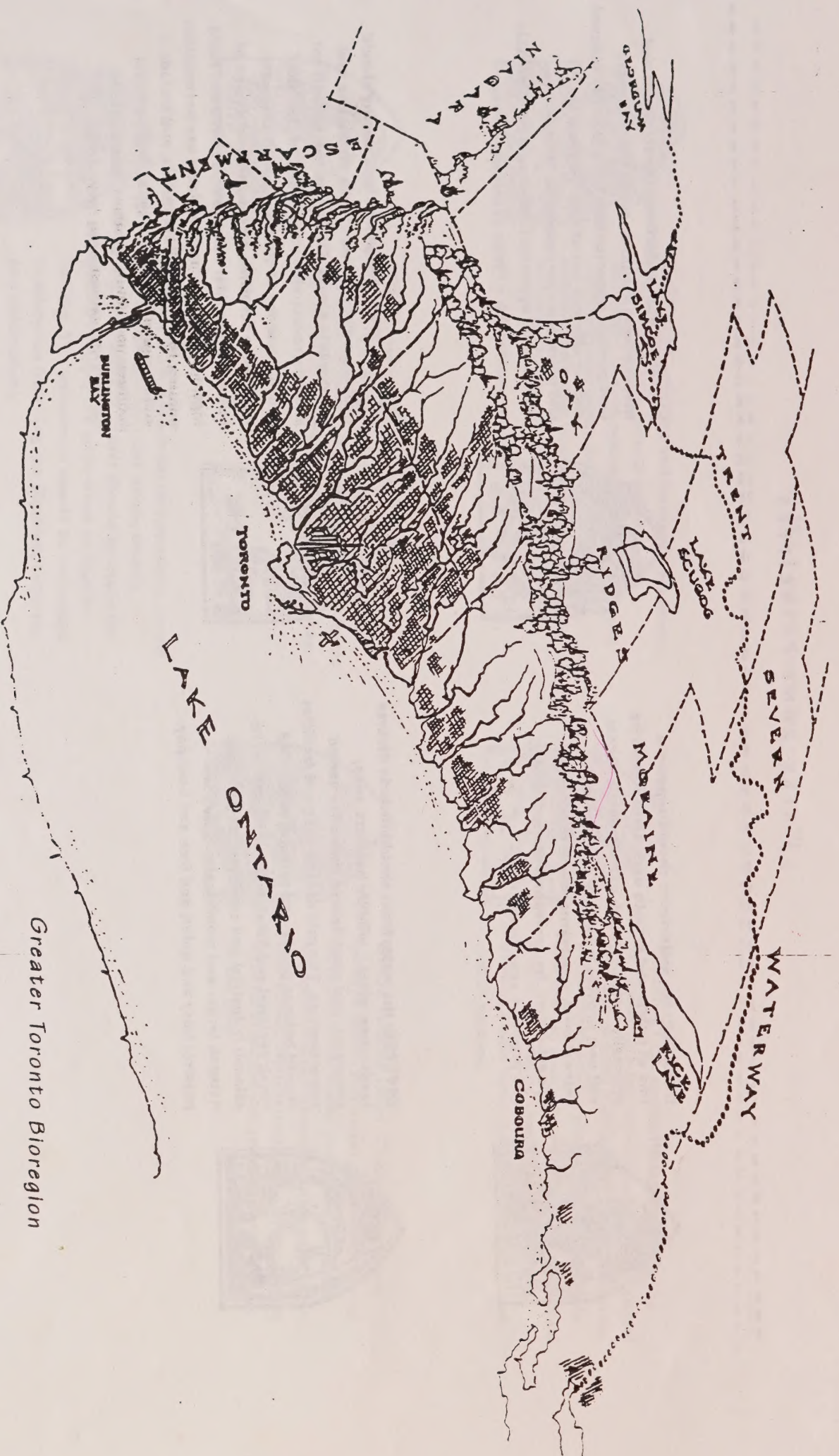
AFFORDABLE: waterfront development and management should be undertaken in ways that provide opportunities for economic renewal and for efficient use of limited government and private-sector resources. Waterfront recreational opportunities should be affordable to people with a range of income levels.



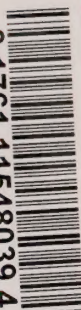
DIVERSE: the waterfront should include diverse landscapes, places, wildlife habitats, uses, programs, and experiences that offer varied opportunities. The mix of land uses and facilities should balance public and private; urban and rural; regional and local; residential and recreational; industrial and commercial; built and natural; large- and small-scale; active and passive; busy and quiet; and free and user-pay.



ATTRACTIVE: design and landscaping should protect, enhance, and create distinctive and memorable places. Design on the waterfront should protect vistas and views of the lake; provide a sense of continuity with the past; emphasize sensitive placement and design of buildings; consider relationships between buildings, open spaces, and the lake; use harmonious colours, textures and materials; and include a wide range of landscape types (e.g., wildlife habitats, parklands, gardens, promenades, courtyards, waterscapes, play areas).



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